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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that effective schools meet their educational objectives when they promote collaboration and coordination among all school publics via the participative decision-making School Development Program Model. Steps and guidelines are listed to integrate the program into school systems. In addition, the model's structure, functions, and operations are described. The implementation of the model should promote mutual respect among the school's internal and external constituencies; permit systematic identification of problems, solutions, and opportunities within the school; create a sense of achievement among adults who participate in the program; and improve student social adjustment and academic performance by virtue of the concern shown by program participants. (JAM)

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Promoting School Success Through Collaboration and Coordination

By

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Participatory Management, quality circles, and team building are but a few of the labels applied to describe the efforts of organizations directed at moving from a heirarchical, autocratic management style to what Rensis Likert has described as System 4 management (French, Bell 1984). System 4 management is participative, democratic, and team oriented.

In their classic study of the Harwood Manufacturing Company's reorganization project, which moved the company's managerial style from System 1 (autocratic, controlling, and authority-obedience oriented) to System 4, Marrow, Bowers, and Seashore (1970) found that participatory management resulted in increased productivity, decreased absenteeism and staff turnover, increased job satisfaction, and a more positive regard for the company by employees. Similar studies by Spector (1986) and Nielsen (1975), Bragg and Andrews, (1973) and Beckhard and Lake (1971) report essentially the same outcomes. It is clear then that, business and industry have recognized the need to create new models of organization and management in order to be competitive and profitable. Intra and inter organizational collaboration is a concept that has become characteristic of virtually all of the Fortune 500 Companies and is slowly finding its way into some of our public institutions.

Appley and Winder (1977) have defined collaboration as a relational sytem of individuals within groups, in which:

1. Individuals in a group share mutual aspirations and a common conceptual framework;

2. The interactions among individuals are characterized by each individuals consciousness of his or her motives toward the other; and a commitment to work with the other over time provided that this commitment is a matter of choice.

According to Hord (1986), there are specific rewards associated with collaborative work, they include:

1. the creation of a product or service that neither of the collaborators could produce alone;
2. the release of a responsibility that neither collaborator could carry independently;
3. in the case of public service organizations, the public may gain greater benefit from the joint effort than each separate party could have offered;
4. the product or service of the joint endeavor can sometimes lead to permanent relationships, opening the way for further sharing and mutual benefit;
5. each collaborator can experience an expansion of possibilities without having to spread thin and;
6. although more time, energy, and resources may have been expended, very often, the same time, energy and resources are ultimately conserved by shared effort. Duplication of services is sometimes eliminated while improving the quality of services.

Given the challenge faced by schools, it would appear that they could benefit from a collaborative approach in achieving their aims, and in identifying and solving problems. While healthy relationships are a cornerstone to virtually any organization's success, they appear to be

even more important for organizations like schools (that provide a human service) where the greatest investment is in people. Ann Lieberman (1986) has suggested that social relationships are critical to school success, she states: "Schools where people work together to confront their problems, where teachers have maximum authority to do their work but are collectively engaged in dialogue about the central problems of the school are places that are more likely to be successful for the adults and the children." Current research supports Lieberman's position.

Brown (1987) found that school based management resulted in a high level of decisionmaking, flexibility, accountability and efficiency. Teacher satisfaction was moderately positive, and parents and students experienced higher levels of satisfaction. Additional benefits of participatory school based management include more trust and openness in interpersonal relationships (Bartunek and Keys, 1982).

In spite of the studies and practical wisdom that suggest that collaboration and broad based participation would improve the quality of schooling, school leaders have been slow to respond. Roland Barth (1984) has acknowledged that social relations of teachers and principals are characterized by poor communication and isolation. Our work in schools across the nation has found adversarial relationships within groups of teachers, between teachers and administration, between administration and central office, and between school and home. Yet we know that the support and input of all of the key players ---parents, teachers administrators, central office staff, and other child advocacy agencies--is necessary to create an effective learning environment for students.

In addition to having the problems faced by schools generally, city schools are confronted with yet another problem. Urban school districts have to educate thousands of youngsters who are "at risk" and live in families that suffer from debilitating--even life threatening social and economic stressors, for instance:

- in many urban systems the dropout rate is as high as 43%;
- absenteeism can run as high 40%
- urban students lag 2-3 years behind their suburban peers on measure of academic achievement

Moreover, low income minority students constitute a majority in our largest urban school distircts, and so are represented disproportionately in the at-risk population. If, as Jesse Jackson has said, that "education is preparation for life," then we must consider that schools as they are presently organized, are not doing the job of educating youth for life in a technologically oriented global village. Low income children in general, and Black youngsters particularly are not being adequately served. Therefore there is the need for a structure within schools that organizes all of the human and material resources toward the end of the total education and development of children.

Our position then is that schools must be reorganized to:

(1) Bring parents, educators, and child service providers together on a regular basis to plan and coordinate activities that educate and develop children;

(2) Provide opportunities for these individuals to solve school problems in a "no fault" atmosphere that focuses on solutions rather than placing blame;

(3) Develop strategies that seek to improve the system while also focusing on individuals who are experiencing difficulties within the system;

(4) Develop a way to monitor, evaluate, and revise strategies and implementations designed for system wide improvement, and;

(5) Periodically reflect on their working relationships with a view, toward valuing differences of opinions, managing conflict constructively, and reaching consensus on how to address issues rather than majority/minority dominance.

In the following pages I shall highlight the sallient features of the School Development Program Model developed by Dr. James P. Comer and his Yale University Child Study Center Staff. In this model, knowledge of the behavioral and social sciences are applied to every aspect of a school program and the focus is on parent, teacher, administrator and student strengths rather than weaknesses or deficits. The emphasis is on changing the interactions (ecology) and/or climate of a school or social system from difficult to desirable and, in turn, facilitating the growth and development of parents, school staff, and students. The school development approach schools is inclusive of but broader than the definition of "effective schools" described by the late Ronald Edmonds and others.

Edmonds defined an effective school as one which brings the children of low income families to those minimal masteries of basic schools skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance of the middle class (Edmonds, 1982) defines an effective school as follows:

> Effective schools seek to promote the overall development of individuals. They enhance social, psychological, and moral development among students so that they can interact positively with others within and outside of their respective social networks and communities. They build within youngsters a strong desire to excel; to rise above personal circumstances and to improve themselves and the people and things around them for the good of all. And in the process, students gain the levels of basic skill mastery which allow them to meet all of the expectations of our society in an effective and responsible way as students, and eventually as adult heads of families, members of communities, and citizens.

This definition recognizes that adequate overall development makes school learning and desirable social behavior possible; that these achievements, in turn, make successful adult life performance possible.

A school district wishing to adopt the SDP model must agree to carry out nine developmental steps that lead to the integration of the program into its system. The nine steps are:

1. school board and superintendent orientation and committment;
2. selection of a change agent to oversee the administering and monitoring of the program;
3. orientation of other key staff- central office administrators, target school principals, etc.;
4. orientation of building level staff and parents;
5. the establishment of a district level steering committee;
6. the establishment of a governance and management body in each target school;
7. the establishment of a support staff program-psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, and counselor to deal with mental health and relationship issues and to better coordinate the work of mental health professionals with parents and faculty;

8. the establishment of a parent participation program; and;

9. the establishment of a review and modification process.

The steps may be modified in response to local needs and conditions.

The structure, functions, and operations of the program are broad, as are the guiding principles. This characteristic of the model reflects the realization that the school is the basic unit of change, and that each system and each school building must have enough operating room within the model's structure to respond to their own unique needs. A description of the basic structure of the program and its guiding principles will follow.

STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS, AND OPERATIONS

SDP STEERING COMMITTEE

The School Development Program is monitored by a steering committee that meets monthly. It is composed of appropriate central office staff and representatives. This committee is led by the Superintendent and it provides support and direction for schools in the SDP network. The Yale Child Study Center School Development Program staff work hand in hand with school officials to assist the school based effort in the key areas of planning, prioritizing, monitoring and evaluation.

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (SDP)

The SDP model is used to plan and manage all activities within the school in a way that promotes desirable staff and parent functioning and, in turn, desirable student learning and behavior. The SDP model is a systems level primary prevention approach that addresses all aspects of a school's operation, not a particular group of individuals, or any particular pre-targeted specific aspect of a school. It is a process model that allows the school to review its goals and methods and to identify problems and opportunities in a "no fault" atmosphere. It seeks to develop creative ways of dealing with problems, and to implement these ways using the collective good judgement of school officials and parents. The program is carried out through regularly scheduled meetings of its three components, the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), the Mental Health Team (MHT) and the Parent Program .

The key program component is the building level representative governance and management body commonly referred to as the SCHOOL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT TEAM. This group is led by the principal, and it includes an MHT member and representatives selected by teachers and parents. It should meet at least twice a month. The meeting should include an agenda that is distributed in advance of the meeting and members should distribute minutes of the meeting to their constituents. In order to encourage broad participation, various sub committees should be formed to work on projects and to deal with issues that affect the overall functioning of the school (See figure 3). The SPMT should:

- Establish policy guidelines for all aspects of the school program
- Respond directly to problems and/or opportunities, or delegate this responsibility to other groups or individuals who will report back.
- Carry out systematic school planning related to social climate, academics, and staff development, and public relations
- Promote effective resource utilization, coordination, and program implementation
- Work closely with parents to plan an annual school calendar which integrates social, academic, and staff development functions
- Monitor program activities

The COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL PLAN should be developed by the SPMT. And it provides year long direction and focus to the school in its effort to fulfill its mission. It is monitored and adjusted through SPMT meetings.

It is aligned with the particular school district's strategic plan and places specific emphasis on academic and social development, school climate, public relations, and staff development. The governance and management group must be representative of the teachers, administrators, aides, etc. and parents within the school community.

The MENTAL HEALTH TEAM is made up of the school social worker, psychologist, special education teacher, counselor, and other appropriate building level support staff. This group is also led by the principal. It works in a diagnostic/prescriptive and preventive fashion. It provides ongoing consultation to teachers and to the governance and management body in matters that pertain to child development. It meets on a weekly basis to:

- Apply, through its representative, child development and relationship knowledge and skills to the social climate, academic, and staff development programs developed by the SPMT
- Consult with classroom teachers to assist them in responding to students in a way which promotes growth and development
- Assist classroom teachers in developing strategies that prevent minor problems from becoming major ones
- Set up individualized programs for children with special needs. This may involve the utilization of services outside of the schools when necessary and possible
- Make recommendations for building level policy changes designed to prevent problems.
- Assist all staff members in bridging the gap between special education and regular classroom activities

- Provide consultation and training workshops to staff and parents on child development human relations, and other mental health issues
- Facilitate the many interactions between parents and school staff

The SDP views the PARENT PROGRAM as the cornerstone for success in developing a school environment that stimulates the total development of its students. Parents are expected to:

- Select representatives from their group to serve on the governance and management team
- Participate in activities initiated by the parent-teacher general membership group and SPMT
- Review the school plan developed by the SPMT
- Support the efforts of the school to assist students in their overall development.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Supervisor of Staff Development works with individual schools to develop inservice workshops and seminars that address training needs created by the Comprehensive School Plan or other school wide improvement projects that are initiated by the SPMT. Input from teachers, administrators, and support staff is solicited in developing training programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In order to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society all children must experience a high level of personal development. We must efficiently and effectively use our collective energies and resources to prepare them to enter into the adult world as confident and competent individuals. Hence, schools must endeavor to build working relationships that allow the young to solve the problems that impede their development. By creating a desirable climate or ethos, schools provide models of appropriate human behavior that children can identify with, imitate, internalize, grow and fully develop academically and socially.

Such conditions can not be created overnight. They must be generated and nurtured through a process of desirable staff, student and parental interaction. The SPMT, MHT, and Parent Program provide the structure or framework through which the process takes place.

The principal is a key figure in that he or she leads this endeavor and models the appropriate behavior. As teachers, parents, and support staff serve on the respective teams, they then assume some responsibility for exhibiting the behaviors that move the school toward a climate that is characterized by collaboration, trust, problem solving, and the recognition of all as important parties in the education of children. Our assumption is that virtually any human problem can be solved if people are willing to meet on a consistent basis, and explore and develop solutions--without placing blame--develop interventions, and expend the energy necessary to implement and monitor them. Hard work, along with a passionate belief in human growth and potential must characterize Project Excel/SDP schools. No short, sweet, easy approach will work.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum should contain activities, experiences, and content that many students from families under less social stress gain before and outside of school. It should be stimulating and should have personal meaning and utility for students. It should provide students with opportunities to acquire and refine basic skills, to think independently, and to engage in simulated and real world activities that aid their psycho-social development.

RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of the relationships between adults within the school community directly influences the social development of students. Healthy relationships between adults provide models for students to identify with, imitate, and internalize. Hence, it is important for educators and parents to work together to identify and solve problems that could adversely impact the overall school climate and student development.

PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The planning and introduction of new programs should be facilitated through the governance and management group. Planning should be conducted from a systems perspective. Any program development or modification should first consider how such change will impact on the total system or school community. Schools must do short and long range planning, with input from parents and educators. Planning and coordination should prevent program duplication, fragmentation, wasted energy and resources and create a sense of direction and purpose.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Problems are solved in a no fault atmosphere with collaborative input from appropriate staff and parents. There is a specific structure used to engage in problem solving by the respective teams within the schools (see figure 5). During meetings participants make a conscious attempt to focus on problem solving rather than placing blame. Within the SDP model problems are seen as opportunities to tap the creativity and resourcefulness of the group rather than as crises that immobilize the movement of the school.

DECISION MAKING

Means are not always justified by the end. Process is as important as product. Decisions should be reached by consensus rather than "tyranny of the majority". There should be no winners or losers. New ideas should be tried, assessed, and changed if it is felt that changes are necessary. Collaborative decision making that does not paralyze the leader creates a shared sense of ownership in school activities and outcomes; thus a wider commitment among staff and parents to "make things work".

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The implementation stage of the program begins with orientation and overview sessions, with the principal initially, and later with the general faculty. After these sessions the School Development Coordinator works with the principal to:

Establish a process for selecting representation for the SPMT

Prepare a year long schedule of SPMT meetings

Collaborate with SPMT members to set standard operating procedures for the team, e.g. agenda setting, distribution of minutes, problem solving procedures, length of meetings.

Facilitate the development of the Comprehensive School Plan by the SPMT and a procedure for monitoring it

Establish the MHT and a time in which the team can meet weekly to review student cases; to discuss intra-school programs and procedures that affect teacher and student performance and well being, and to generally develop programs and activities that contribute to positive school climate and promote student success.

Grade level meetings, curriculum work groups, fund raising committees, and the like, should report to the SPMT. The work of the SPMT and MHT should serve as a model for all committee's or work groups established within the school. All groups should be conscious of "no fault" and collaborative problem solving and all the other guiding principles. As the SPMT, MHT and sub-committees use these guidelines in their work, they become integrated into the day to day operations of the school and eventually institutionalized. The guiding principles become second nature to staff and are seen as the "natural" and "right way" to conduct school affairs. They manifest themselves in the classroom, the guidance office, the playground, the cafeteria, and under the best of circumstances--in the home and community.

Discussion

The School Development Program is designed to coordinate and integrate all of the activities involved in developing and educating students within a school. It offers a common ground for parents, educators, and child service providers to work together on behalf of children. This should improve communciation, provide a sense of direction, common cause and ownership, and

responsibility for the outcomes of the programs of the school. It should promote mutual respect among parents, teachers, and administrators. It should permit systematic identification of problems and opportunities within the school and thoughful, focused solutions to them. The "bottom line" effect is that a sense of community and an ethos supportive of achievement is created among the adults in the system. This is experienced by the students and, in turn, improves their social and academic performance.

This is not a painless process. The coordinated effort will surface organization, management, personnel and other problems. Initial phases of the models introduction will be uncomfortable, but the model does permit orderly and cooperative attention to these problems. It permits them to be solved rather than to "fester" and lead to acting up and acting out problems among students, parents and staff.

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